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# In Deed: A Survey of Programs and Activities Related to Identity and Mission: Saint Peter's College

Editorial Board

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## Saint Peter's College

Jersey City, New Jersey

Within the past decade, Jersey City, located directly across the Hudson River from lower Manhattan, has become a revitalized small city, attracting companies to the new Exchange Place financial district and drawing over 100 different ethnic groups to historic neighborhoods.

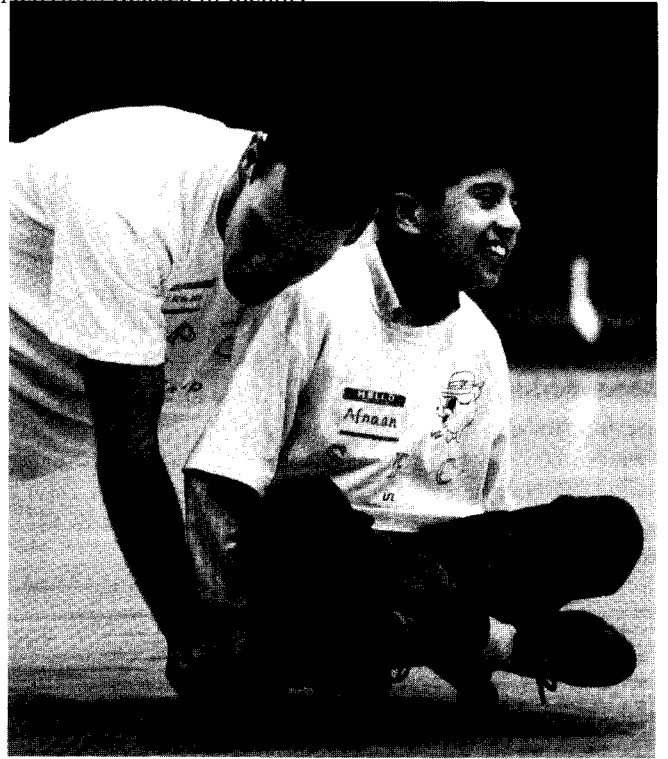
Saint Peter's College has long been a landmark in the heart of this city. The college's campus spills over two city blocks, divided by a busy boulevard. Much of

In 1975, Saint Peter's College established a branch campus in Englewood Cliffs, a quiet suburban town located about 15 miles up the Hudson River from Jersey City. The Englewood Cliffs Campus primarily enrolls working adults from nearby corporate parks and medical centers who are pursuing undergraduate and graduate degrees through evening and weekend study. Saint Peter's two campuses reflect a spectrum of ages, backgrounds and ambitions.

Only ten years ago, Saint Peter's College was entirely a commuter school. In 1984, it purchased and renovated a neighboring garden apartment complex for student housing. The following year, a second apartment house was purchased and renovated. In fall 1993, Saint Peter's College opened Whelan Hall, a brand new, four-story, traditional style student residence.

Residence life has expanded opportunities for conversation between faculty and students, dialogue with the Jesuits and animated discussion among students. Commuter students also benefit by the exchange of ideas, sharing and fellowship that are kindled by residential life.

the school's personality comes from its location in Jersey City, where, since 1872, some of the best teachers in the nation have educated the children of long established families along with those of recent arrivals. Today the Saint Peter's College student body is comprised of 3,483 individuals born in 65 countries.



Jersey City children doubled up with Saint Peter's students during Partnership with Children Day.

### A Rigorous Education

"Our first intent is the advancement of learning," said Rev. Robert L. Gannon SJ, the dean in 1930 when Saint Peter's College reopened after closing during World War I. Serving the individual and community through a rigorous focus on education has been the mission of Saint Peter's College since its founding. Through the years from the "Million Dollar Faculty" of Father Gannon's time to today, the Jesuit identity of Saint Peter's College has been deliberately and conspicuously pursued.

To complement the Jesuit nature of the academic programs, campus activities—including retreats, prayer groups, and daily liturgies—provide opportunities for members of the college community to participate and learn more about the Jesuit nature of the college.

Recently, the newly formed Committee for Jesuit Identity sponsored a

panel discussion on the subject of *Women in Jesuit Higher Education*. Saint Peter's College has been coeducational in day and evening sessions since 1966. Well attended by all segments of the community, the program led to ongoing discussion, an article in the student newspaper and the planning of another presentation during the spring 1994 semester.

The idea that each of us has something to give to others is instilled through a variety of community outreach projects sponsored by campus ministry, student activities and academic departments. Students deliver food and clothes to the homeless, travel to Mexico to work with poor families, and, this year, initiated a "Saint Peter's College in Partnership with Children Day." Forty Jersey City children were doubled up with Saint Peter's students for a day of volleyball, basketball, and skateboarding. "Our chil-



Rev. Daniel A. Degnan SJ, president of Saint Peter's College, with students.

dren are our future, and the experiences they have now will affect their future," said one student organizer. "It shows that Saint Peter's College cares."

In a recent conversation, Rev. Daniel Degnan SJ, the current president of Saint Peter's College, said: "To put it simply: We teach and we teach with love. To teach with love means to demand hard work from students who must learn a discipline of the mind, habits of study and a rigor of analysis."

"At the end and at the beginning of love and knowledge, there is our relationship to God. Theology, the study of the individual's relationship to God, is at the center of the Saint Peter's College education."

### Sharing Resources

Saint Peter's College has always shared its intellectual and physical resources with the community. The college is generous when a neighboring high school needs a gymnasium for intramural sports, a community group needs a meeting place for a public forum or the local library needs a speaker for a lecture series.

Increasingly, Saint Peter's College brings its resources to the community. College credit courses are given at Newark International Airport and at four local hospitals. Courses leading to the bachelor's degree and the M.B.A. degree are offered at the new Merrill Lynch office tower on the Jersey City waterfront about two miles from campus.

Several partnerships with local high schools en-

courage students to stay in school. A "Can Do" Program helps prepare teenagers for the reality of the business world. The Reading Center offers courses, such as *English for New Americans* and Saturday programs for elementary school children.

### Advancing Learning

In 1988, a Governor's Excellence Initiative Award enabled Saint Peter's College to establish the Institute for the Advancement of Urban Education, a partnership with seven local high schools and six elementary schools. The idea is to initiate strategies to improve teaching in urban communities. Groups of elementary school and high school teachers, along with Saint

Peter's College teachers, collaborate to devise new teaching techniques which are then tested in the classroom. The results of this important research are disseminated nationally through workshops, presentation, journal articles, an electronic bulletin board and a telecommunications network.

Through satellite dishes and television monitors, Saint Peter's and its partner schools can interact and communicate. The Institute has sponsored two nationally broadcasted symposia—one featured Dr. Ernest L. Boyer, the former United States Commissioner of Education—and a series of distance-learning graduate seminars. Elementary school children, high school

and college students and adult students, too, benefit from tutoring, computer assisted instruction, and skills workshops given by the Institute.

### Continuing Traditions

Each spring, alumni come together to spend a day renovating and repairing the homes of the elderly and others in Jersey City who cannot make basic repairs themselves. As one alumnus said at his 25th reunion, "It is our turn to demonstrate that we have learned, by the example of the Jesuits, how to share."

The lessons of a unique, urban, Jesuit education are not easily forgotten.

## University of Detroit Mercy

### Detroit, Michigan

When the University of Detroit and Mercy College of Detroit consolidated in 1990 to become University of Detroit Mercy, the university benefited in having both the Jesuit and the Mercy traditions to guide its mission. The collaboration of traditions provided a unique perspective in forming the university's core values: a passion for excellence, an emphasis on the liberal arts and science, a focus on ethics and values in personal and professional life, a recognition of the centrality of religious faith in the educative process

and commitment to personal attention to students as individuals. These values create the foundation for university activities in the classroom, on the individual campuses and in the community.

Today the university comprises four campuses with a diverse student body of approximately 7,500 students—33% of whom are minority students. Under the leadership of President Maureen A. Fay OP, PhD, (the only female president of a Jesuit university or college), University of Detroit Mercy has initiated a five-year strategic plan to con-



In one of the research projects of the Center for Excellence in Environmental Engineering and Science's, Pradip Bhowmik, assistant professor of Chemistry, is studying the feasibility of using waste tires in asphalt pavement mix.